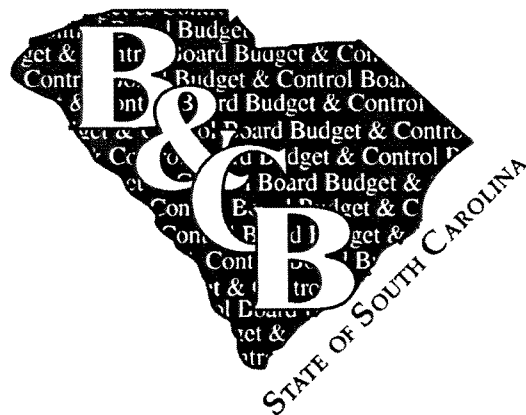


June 3, 2004

State Government News Summary



**Prepared by the Budget and Control Board
Office of the Executive Director**



Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

Income tax cut appears dead

Senate abandons proposal; many other issues on agenda for final day

By JENNIFER TALHELM
Staff Writer

It took the Senate about three minutes Wednesday to kill Gov. Mark Sanford's top legislative priority — a proposed income tax cut.

Unless its backers can revive the issue today — a long shot on the last day of the 2004 General Assembly — Sanford will end his second legislative year having accomplished few of his goals.

"It is dead as a doornail this year," Sen. John Courson, R-Richland, said of the plan to reduce the 7 percent state income tax to 4.75 percent over 10 years. Courson supports the plan.

Some senators already were looking to next year, hoping to push for broader tax reform — affecting income, sales and property taxes.

The Senate ended last week locked in debate over the income tax plan, with Democrats promising to filibuster until the session's end. Republicans needed 28 votes to end the delay, but after several tries could muster just 25.

At the beginning of the day Wednesday, Finance Committee chairman Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, asked to send the tax cut back to committee, effectively killing the bill. Leatherman said the Senate had to be able to move beyond the issue to get to bills being blocked by the filibuster.

There is still a slim chance Sanford could see the Senate vote on his proposal — it is tacked onto another bill waiting in a tall stack of yet-to-be-considered legislation.

Senate president pro tem Glenn McConnell, R-Charleston, would like to see the Senate take a vote on the tax cut before the session ends.

"We could get to it," he said. "We've got the possibility."

Sanford, though, sounded resigned to the bill's demise. Spokesman Will Folks said the governor worked hard to pass the tax cut, blaming archaic rules in the Senate for allowing a minority to hold up legislation the majority wanted.

"We got it to the 1-yard line," Folks said. "We certainly hope the Senate is going to review its rules in the summer so the will of the majority can't be held hostage."

BUSY DAY

The income tax vote came on a busy day in the Senate. With one day left to go before wrapping up the legislative session, senators whipped through several bills.

They sent an amended version of a property tax plan back to the House. It could become law if the House agrees today. Under the bill, property values for tax purposes could increase no more than 20 percent during a reassessment.

Senators also joined the House in passing the Fiscal Discipline Act, which requires the state to replenish its rainy-day fund and pay down a \$155 million deficit.

Today is likely to be a busy day as well, with lawmakers looking to pass new laws right up to the 5 p.m. close of the session.

But McConnell said he doubts the Senate will take up such controversial bills as civil court reform and state government restructuring.

LOOKING AHEAD

With Sanford's tax cut out of the way, some in the Senate hope to push for tax reform next year instead of piecemeal cuts.

For example, Rep. Rick Quinn, R-Richland, and Sens. Vincent Sheheen, D-Kershaw, and David Thomas, R-Greenville, have already talked about combining property tax reform plans.

The Quinn/Sheheen proposal would remove all responsibility for paying for schools from local governments and give it to the state. It would pay for schools using sales taxes, abandoning property taxes as a way of funding day-to-day school operations.

"If we're going to tackle major change in the tax code, we need to do it in a major fashion," Sheheen said.

Opponents of Sanford's tax plan said it would have benefited only the wealthiest taxpayers — who pay the most tax — and would have hamstrung state government, making it impossible to recover from budget cuts.

But Sanford and supporters of his income tax cut had argued the proposal was an important first step in tax reform.

They said a lower income tax rate would help make South Carolina more attractive to industry compared with neighboring states.

THE CHECKLIST

The death of Sanford's tax cut means he has failed to pass almost any significant legislation this year.

A few weeks ago, Sanford drew up a list of 16 bills he was pushing lawmakers to support. He called it his "Checklist for Change" and held regular news conferences to update his progress.

Now, with one day left in the legislative session, just three bills have passed both the House and Senate to become law.

Thomas said Sanford's public rebukes of the Legislature this year — such as vetoing 106 items in the state budget — have made it difficult to convince lawmakers to support his bills.

He predicted the Republican governor would continue to struggle with the GOP-led Legislature next session.

"I really do think some members taste blood," Thomas said. "They see he's had trouble getting things passed."

Reach Talhelm at (803) 771-8339 or jtalhelm@thestate.com



Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

Senators OK new judgeship legislation

Bill aimed at increasing number of black judges goes back to House

By RICK BRUNDRETT
Staff Writer

The S.C. House today will consider an amended bill aimed at increasing the number of black candidates nominated for state court seats and making the process more open.

On a voice vote Wednesday, the Senate passed a version that significantly altered a House bill. It returns to the House today, the last regular day of the legislative session.

Given the tight timetable, the House likely would have to accept the Senate version for the bill to become law, said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Leon Howard, D-Richland.

"This bill is not a cure-all, but it's a step in the right direction," Howard said. "We've made a lot progress; we now can pass out twice as many (judicial candidates) as we used to."

Rep. Bill Cotty, R-Richland, believes chances are good that the Senate version will pass the House.

"I think it is a favorable middle ground that will give more chances for minorities to be qualified," said Cotty, a white lawyer.

The Senate version, pushed by Senate President Pro Tem Glenn McConnell, R-Charleston, would raise to six from three the number of candidates who can be nominated by the Judicial Merit Selection Commission.

Howard's bill called for the cap to be removed.

He and other black lawmakers say the cap has prevented black candidates from getting nominated and discouraged others from running.

Candidates for Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, administrative law, circuit and family court seats are nominated by the 10-member screening committee and elected by the Legislature.

McConnell is vice chairman of the screening committee, which is made up of six legislators and four non-legislators. Two of the 10 committee members are black; the rest are white.

South Carolina's circuit and appellate courts are among the least diverse in the nation when compared with the state's overall black population, according to a study published in March by The State newspaper.

South Carolina and Virginia are the only states whose trial and appellate judges are elected by legislators.

The Senate version of Howard's bill requires that two-thirds of judicial screening committee members present at a meeting agree to extend nominations beyond three. Howard said he didn't agree with that provision.

But he likes another Senate provision requiring that all screening committee votes be done in public and be recorded.

Commission member Curtis Shaw of Greenwood said Wednesday that publishing all the votes isn't a good idea because it "might embarrass some candidates who might not make it."

But the retired Court of Appeals judge, who is white, said raising the cap doesn't bother him.

"We do not use any bias" in making nominations, he said.

The Senate struck a controversial amendment to Howard's bill that would have eliminated the one-year waiting period for legislators who want to run for judgeships. Critics say the amendment would have given lawmakers an unfair advantage.

Reach Brundrett at (803) 771-8484 or rbrundrett@thestate.com.

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Black judicial candidates not easy to find

By Andrew Dys The Herald

(Published June 3, 2004)

CHESTER -- The S.C. Legislature won't pick a successor for 6th Circuit Judge Paul Short until next year, but there are few -- if any -- potential black candidates.

In a vote of the General Assembly last week, Chester's Short, who is white, narrowly defeated 5th Circuit Judge L. Casey Manning, who is black. Some in the state, including the Legislative Black Caucus, raised concerns about the appeals court election and for months have complained about the overall lack of diversity on the bench.

Short's circuit court slot covers Chester, Lancaster and Fairfield counties and will be open for election when the Legislature reconvenes in January.

Census figures show Fairfield County has a 59 percent black population, Chester County, 39 percent, and Lancaster County, 27 percent. Any potential judge for the 6th Circuit must be at least 32 years old, live in one of the circuit's three counties, be a state resident for five years and be licensed for at least eight years, according to the Legislature's Judicial Merit Selection Commission.

Through a voluntary survey done at the request of the S.C. Black Lawyers Association, the S.C. Bar Association identified three black lawyers in the 6th Circuit, said state bar President Earl Ellis. However, one of those black lawyers, Gwendlyne Smalls, said she lives in Richland County. Smalls said she has never lived in Fairfield County but does some of her law work there. Another black lawyer who works in all three counties, 6th Circuit Assistant Solicitor Chris Taylor, said he neither lives in the circuit nor has the required eight years of experience. Assistant solicitors like Taylor are not required to live in the circuits in which they live. Another young lawyer lives in Winnsboro but also doesn't have the required eight years of experience.

"I don't know anybody who actually lives there," Smalls said of black lawyers living in the 6th Circuit.

"What this means is that any potential candidate won't mirror the population," said Rep. Todd Rutherford, D-Richland, and a member of the black caucus who has pushed for reform. Rutherford, a lawyer who does some practicing in the 6th Circuit, said, "It is a particular problem in that circuit."

Unlike South Carolina, 21 states elect judges by popular vote, Ellis said. South Carolina does have at-large judges also elected by the Legislature who can be from anywhere in the state. One at-large judge is from the 6th Circuit -- Kenneth Goode of Winnsboro, who is white. The circuit's two Family Court judges are also white.

The state is about 30 percent black, but only 7 percent of judges are black. However, that 7 percent just about mirrors the percentage of black lawyers in the state.

Manning's political loss to Short came under fire from South Carolina native Jesse Jackson on Monday and was of concern to many in the black caucus. "The fact Casey Manning didn't win hurt so badly because he is so electable," Rutherford said.

Smalls said she plans to run for the Family Court judge slot in the 5th Circuit, where she lives. The slot came open with the election of Judge Bruce Williams to the appeals court last week.

Ellis said the bar does not identify lawyers by race but has endorsed a bill -- introduced in the Legislature but not approved -- that would lift the current cap of three finalists for judge positions. Proponents say lifting the cap

could open up judge seats to more candidates, including blacks.

Rutherford, opposed to popular vote judicial elections espoused by some as a way for diversity on the bench, also introduced a bill in the Legislature that hasn't passed which would drop the one-year waiting period for sitting legislators to run for judgeships.

"This would be another way to elect more black judges," Rutherford said. "There are dedicated lawyers already in public service who might be willing to run and win."

However, that idea won't help get more black candidates in the 6th Circuit right now because none of the members of the General Assembly representing those counties is black.

Short said Tuesday he expects to join the appeals court after he finishes with a double murder trial in Chester scheduled for later this month. S.C. Court Administration will have to send another circuit court judge to handle terms of court in the 6th Circuit until the Legislature can select a successor.

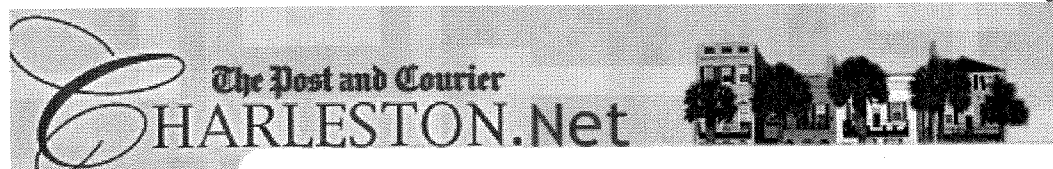
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Story last updated at 6:52 a.m. Thursday, June 3, 2004

Clock ticks as lawmakers weigh bills

Results mixed on Sanford agenda

BY CLAY BARBOUR
Of The Post and Courier Staff

COLUMBIA--The General Assembly finally turned its attention to Gov. Mark Sanford's legislative agenda Wednesday, passing one item, killing another and playing political football with a third.

The state Senate passed the Fiscal Discipline Act, a bill that earmarks \$50 million for the state's \$155 million deficit and ensures that state surpluses through 2008-09 will go to the Capital Reserve Fund. The bill now goes to Sanford for his signature.

Senators also put the final nail in the coffin on Sanford's income tax reduction plan, sending the proposal back to committee.

Those two actions were relatively direct when compared to the shenanigans that took place with the governor's Teacher Protection Act, a bill that would allow teachers to bring felony charges against students who assault them.

Before the day ended, both the Senate and the House passed versions of the bill. The victory for Sanford, however, was tainted by the presence of bobtailed amendments.

Feeling the crunch of today's 5 p.m. deadline, lawmakers spent a hectic day pushing bills through. By day's end, more than 16 bills had crossed between the two chambers, most heavily laden with amendments.

That's typical for this time of year, as lawmakers search for vehicles to get their legislation out of one house and into the



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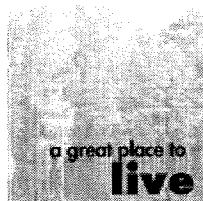
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Early Wednesday, House members passed the governor's Teacher Protection Act after attaching three amendments: the controversial gay marriage ban, new regulations for probate judges and a proposal to make it illegal for state agencies to hire contract lobbyists. All three proposals had passed the House this session, but they fell off the radar in the Senate.

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House rules for bobtailing, which are more forgiving than the Senate's, allow bills from the same committee to be tacked on. All three proposals had passed through the House Judiciary Committee.

Senators got wind of the additions and were not pleased. On Wednesday, when informed of the governor's bob-tailed bill, Sen. Larry Martin, R-Pickens, grimaced and pointed to the in-box on the Senate clerk's desk.



"We are measuring our box in feet now, not inches," he said, pointing to the stack of bills at least 12 inches high. "There is not enough time to get to everything. And there have been so many things attached to so many bills, we are not likely to pass anything else for the rest of the year."



Bobtailing, the practice of loading bills with loosely connected pieces of legislation, has caused controversy all session. The governor spotlighted the issue when he vetoed the Life Sciences Act, which carried more than 20 amendments, connected by the vague theme of economic development.

Just before adjourning Wednesday, senators approved another version of Sanford's teacher-protection proposal, this time attaching it as an amendment to a proposal to qualify members of the Coast Guard for in-state tuition.

This move, which essentially bypassed the bill sent over by the House earlier in the day, was accomplished by changing the language of the Coast Guard bill. The new version stipulated that anyone convicted of violating the Teacher Protection Act would not qualify for in-state tuition.

"We still have a good chance of getting Teacher Protection passed," said Sen. John Kuhn, R-Charleston, one of the senators responsible for the move.

That bill is now in the House and should be addressed today.

Sanford's spokesman, Will Folks, said the governor would have to wait and see what happens to the Teacher Protection Act before deciding how he will react to it.

"The governor has a duty to uphold the constitution as it relates to the need for amendments to be connected by a single subject,"

he said.

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Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

Minibottle wholesalers, restaurateurs gird for fight

Two sides look to sway voters, who will decide in November whether minis stay or go

By NOELLE PHILLIPS
Staff Writer

The upstairs at Green's Liquors off Assembly Street is stacked with cases of liquor, mostly in minibottles sold to restaurants and bars.

A Nov. 2 referendum could lead Green's and other wholesalers across the state to liquidate much of that inventory.

At issue is a vote to take minibottle requirements out of the state constitution, a move legislators approved Tuesday after years of debate.

On Wednesday, wholesalers and their opposition were figuring out how to appeal to voters while defending financial interests tied up in the 30-year-old law.

For wholesalers like Green's, a change in minibottle sales ultimately could lead to financial loss if the Legislature were to change laws on how liquor is sold.

As for the restaurant and bar industry, more money is to be made by free-pour liquor sales.

But November's referendum will only decide whether or not to take the minibottle requirement out of the state's constitution.

If voters decide they like minibottles, then nothing changes.

If they choose to dump them, then the Legislature would have to rewrite state liquor laws.

Under the current system, alcohol is sold by suppliers to wholesalers to retailers.

In South Carolina, retailers apply for a Class B wholesale license to sell the minibottles to restaurants and bars. Bar owners must buy the minibottles from the 60 businesses that hold those licenses.

Any change in minibottle laws could cause the Class B wholesalers to lose their grip on the restaurant and bar business.

If restaurants and bars could buy straight from a wholesaler, Danny Mansour, of Mansour's Liquors in Greenville, said he would barely maintain his livelihood.

"I wouldn't go out of business, but I would have to get rid of four people," he said.

On Wednesday, a bar owner asked Mansour what he thought of the referendum. Mansour explained his opposition and then told the client how his bar would stand to make more money.

"His eyes lit up at that," Mansour said.

Storage space is another issue for the wholesalers, said Suzie Riga, vice president of Green's.

At Green's Assembly Street store, liquor is stored on a catwalk above the sales floor and in a downstairs stockroom. Minibottles come in compact cases, and Riga can stack 30 into a small space.

"We just don't have the storage for the big bottles," Riga said. "We'll have to decide which brands we want to carry."

The financial interest will be largely unspoken as the sides gear up for the referendum.

Riga talks about drink quality, tax collections, limited product choices, bartender theft and fruit flies — all reasons she sees for keeping minibottles.

For example, Riga said drinks will lose flavor quality if the state switches to larger bottles because they will be opened and will sit on shelves for several days.

"The qualities will escape into the air and will weaken the flavors and characteristics of that brand," she said.

During the legislative session, those who want to keep minibottles insisted the system is the best way for the state to collect 100 percent of its liquor taxes.

Those who want to end the minibottle tradition say drinks made from minibottles have a higher alcohol content and, therefore, lead to higher drunken driving accidents.

They also say drinkers miss out on some cocktails.

Tom Sponseller, executive director of the Hospitality Association of South Carolina, used the margarita as an example.

Traditional margaritas call for tequila and triple sec. In South Carolina, they come with just tequila because it's considered one drink.

Marlene Sipes, executive director of the South Carolina Association of Beverage Retailers, said her group hasn't figured out a strategy to win over voters by November.

"We've got some time before we decide what we're going to do about that," she said.

Sponseller said his group's campaign would depend on what the liquor wholesalers do.

"There'll be some kind of educational campaign," he said. "Over the last 30 years, there's been a lot of confusion. The public doesn't know what its opportunity is."

Mansour isn't waiting around for a formal campaign.

"I want to let people know what they are losing. They are going to get less drink for more money."

Phillips can be reached at (803) 771-8307 or at nophillips@thestate.com.



Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

S.C. drops to 46th in survey of children's well-being

PAMELA HAMILTON
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. - South Carolina's children are faring better in many ways than they were in the 1990s. Fewer children and teenagers are dying and fewer children are being reared by teenage mother, according to the annual Kids Count report.

Despite those gains, South Carolina dropped from 42nd to 46th in the national survey that tracks the well-being of American children, as other Southern states worked to improve their rankings.

"While we were doing better, the other states were doing better too," said Baron Holmes, director of South Carolina's Kids Count project.

Holmes said the backward slip should serve as a reminder the state is stuck at the bottom when it comes to the well-being of children. South Carolina has never ranked above the bottom ten states.

"It just reminds us that we're not in an active phase of addressing these types of problems," Holmes said.

South Carolina ranked ahead of Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico and Alabama.

The report released Thursday found that more babies in South Carolina are being born too small, more babies are dying and more children are being reared by only one parent. Fewer older children are dying by accident, homicide and suicide, but the death rate remains far too high, Holmes said.

Among the report findings:

_ In 2001, 496 babies died before their first birthday. That's about nine of every 1,000 babies. In 1996, closer to eight per 1,000 babies were stillborn.

_ In 2001, 5,340 babies, or 9.6 percent, of babies were born weighing 5.5 pounds or less. That's a slight increase from 9.2 percent in 1996.

_ More teenagers are not attending school or working. Eleven percent of children were idle in 2001, up from 9 percent in 1996.

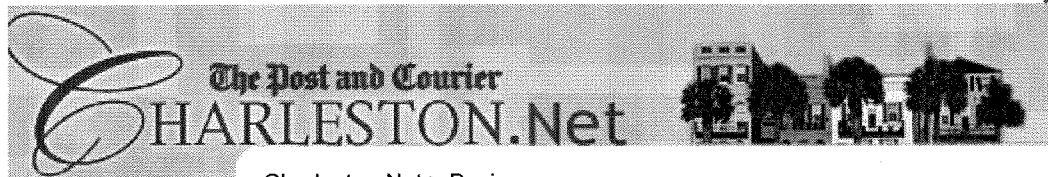
_ From 1996 to 2001, the death rate for children younger than 14 declined by 30 percent.

_ The rate of births to teens declined by 18 percent from 1996 to 2001, to a rate of 32 per 1,000 teen girls ages 15-17 from 39.

_ There was slight increase in the number of children in single-parent homes, from 30 to 31 percent.

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Story last updated at 6:53 a.m. Thursday, June 3, 2004

State Senate moves to attract Tinseltown

Lawmakers OK bill giving incentives to Hollywood crews filming in S.C.

BY KYLE STOCK

Of The Post and Courier Staff

The state Senate passed a bill Wednesday giving big tax breaks and other incentives to film crews that spend millions of dollars on productions in South Carolina.

Professionals in the film industry and lawmakers who supported the bill said the incentives are essential if South Carolina hopes to win productions from other states and countries that have or are developing aggressive programs to lure spending by Hollywood.

"With this legislation, we can sit down at the table, ante up and play with the other guys; without the legislation, we couldn't even get into the room," said Ken French, founding member of the Carolina Film Alliance, a trade group for industry professionals that has lobbied hard for the bill's passage. "It at least puts us on par with our neighboring states, which is important."

Following a final vote in the House today, the bill is expected to be submitted to Gov. Mark Sanford for his signature. Sanford has been a proponent of the film industry in South Carolina and named a film task force shortly after he took office. "We're supportive of any move that makes our state more competitive and brings well-paying, high-quality jobs to South Carolina," Sanford said in a statement Wednesday.

Sanford, along with Commerce Secretary Bob Faith, said film production is a good place to focus economic-development efforts, because it is a clean, high-tech and high-wage industry that does not require a lot of state services.



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The legislation would exempt film crews that spend more than \$250,000 a year from sales and use tax on South Carolina expenditures. Productions that spend more than \$1 million a year would get a 5 percent tax rebate on payroll and a 7 percent rebate on the cost of goods and services purchased in the state. Also, South Carolina taxpayers and companies that invest in movies filmed in-state or production facilities built here will be eligible for a 20 percent income tax credit of up to \$100,000 on their funding.

To pay for the incentives, the South Carolina Film Commission, a unit of the Commerce Department, would get 13 percent of admission taxes -- collected at movie and attraction box offices -- that go to the General Fund, about \$3.4 million last year. An additional 1 percent of the state's admission tax dollars -- about \$262,000 last year -- would pay to promote collaborative programs between the film departments of South Carolina colleges and production companies.

The bill also calls for the Commerce Department to start a foundation to drum up private donations to recruit motion pictures.

"It was a long, hard battle," said Bruce Williamson, vice president of Carolina Film Alliance. "It's really going to kickstart the film industry, which has been dead here for a couple of years. ... (The lawmakers) understand what a film brings here and the rolling effect that money has in the community -- everything from drycleaners and food distributors, to tent rental and the bars that the crews go to at night."

The bill initially passed the House April 14 and saw wide support in the Senate. However, Sen. Phil Leventis, a Democrat from Sumter who sponsored a version of the bill, halted the legislation's progress in an attempt to pass an amendment calling for a \$350,000 state grant to start a film school.

Leventis' proposal met resistance and he withdrew his amendment Wednesday in order to let the bill pass a third reading.

"People like our governor talk about pork, but there's usually some thought behind these things," Leventis said. "It wasn't a blank check for anybody. ... We were just trying to get an emphasis on education and building a stronger (film) crew base here in South Carolina."

The proposed incentives are modest compared with other states. Louisiana and New Mexico, the two states that have been most aggressive about courting Hollywood dollars in recent years, both grant producers tax credits between 10 percent and 20 percent. New Mexico also has \$85 million in no-interest loans available to filmmakers.

Since passing its incentive plan into law, Louisiana has seen in-state production spending jump almost six-fold; New Mexico has reported a 10-fold boost.

North Carolina has been moving ahead on more aggressive

BRIEFCASE

legislation, plans that would provide tax rebates up to 12 percent. The Tar Heel State, long a production hotspot, also boasts lots of studio space and a cadre of resident industry professionals.

Georgia lawmakers turned down an incentive strategy this year, but legislators in Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee have all given their nods to plans to entice films recently.

South Carolina opened its film office in 1980 and, for a time, was a leader in the movie-recruitment game.

With its diverse scenery and climate conducive to year-round filming, the Palmetto State won a number of big productions in the last 20 or so years, including "Prince of Tides," "Die Hard With a Vengeance," "Forrest Gump," "The Patriot" and "O." But the state has seen fewer filmmakers recently as other countries like Canada, Romania and New Zealand drew big Hollywood budgets away with incentives, cheap labor and favorable exchange rates.

The South Carolina Film Commission said about a third of a motion picture's total budget is spent on location and average pay for film-production jobs is \$20.18 per hour.

"The Notebook," a Time Warner Co. film due out June 25, spent an average of \$97,000 per day for 128 days in Berkeley, Charleston and Georgetown counties. "Radio," filmed in Anderson and Colleton counties, generated up to \$120,000 a day in spending for 100 days.

"We've been working on it for three years and it's just been a monumental effort," state Film Commissioner Jeff Moncks said of the legislation. "I've been talking with lots of people and the first thing they want to know is what the incentives are, so yeah, it's going help a lot."

Kyle Stock covers tourism. He can be reached at 937-5763 or at kstock@postandcourier.com.

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Beasley, DeMint campaign on defense, economy

Posted Wednesday, June 2, 2004 - 9:16 pm

By Dan Hoover
STAFF WRITER
dh Hoover@greenvillenews.com

COLUMBIA — David Beasley and Jim DeMint campaigned three miles apart Wednesday, with Beasley adding a new topic to his platform and DeMint refining an old one in the waning days of the Republican U.S. Senate primary campaign.

Beasley surrounded himself with flags and military memorabilia to unveil his national security program in the Spartan meeting hall at American Legion Post No. 6 on the fringe of the University of South Carolina campus.

DeMint was surrounded by men's underwear at Stone Apparel Co., in a North Main Street neighborhood where he hailed the firm as a combination of innovative survival through outsourcing and cutting edge technology.


The two other major candidates took different approaches at opposite ends of the state.

Charleston developer Thomas Ravenel worked the remnants of the breakfast crowd at Tommy's Ham House in Greenville, although he showed up 75 minutes after his scheduled 7:15 arrival.

Former Attorney General Charlie Condon of Sullivan's Island remained at his Lowcountry headquarters making fund-raising calls.

Publicly released polls show Beasley as a solid front-runner, trailed by DeMint with Ravenel moving into a

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close third. If, as expected, no candidate gets a majority in Tuesday's primary, the top two will square off June 22 for the GOP nomination.

Beasley, a former governor from Society Hill in Darlington County, was introduced by his top military ally, state Adjutant General Stan Spears.

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As a senator, Beasley said he would oppose the closing of any of South Carolina's military bases and would support expanding the size of the active duty armed forces, mount an "aggressive effort" to improve port security and push the creation of an anti-missile system.

DeMint, a third-term U.S. House member from Greenville, said Stone Apparel "is a model for what we have to do as a country, as a state, as an economy, to continue to evolve and anticipate markets."

Where manufacturing jobs have been lost overseas, DeMint said the better jobs remain in the supply chain in the United States, similar to what Stone has created.

Gil Fickle, the plant's vice president for manufacturing, said there now are 45 employees compared to 300 in 1990, just before Stone began outsourcing its manufacturing element to the Caribbean, Pacific Rim and Central America.

Jack Stone of Greenville, the 71-year-old company's president, described "a tough transition from manufacturing to technology."

The firm now focuses on research and development with a focus on emerging markets, leaving the manufacturing process to overseas workers. It recently bought into a software company to bolster its technology component.

The issue of trade and the economy, more than any other, has brought out differences between Beasley and DeMint.

DeMint is an internationalist who decried on Wednesday those who hold on to "old ideas." Beasley has been a vocal adherent of cracking down on trade violators and has criticized existing trade agreements that he blames for devastating the state's textile and apparel industries.

But DeMint said the American economy remains hampered a federal tax code that imposes double levies on corporations, a legal system that makes no distinction between legislative and "junk" lawsuits, and ever increasing medical costs. Added to that, he said, is the threat from those who oppose open borders and open markets.

With his defense initiative, Beasley sought to align himself squarely behind President Bush and Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., supporting Bush's policy of pre-emptive strikes against terrorists and rogue states and Graham's for enhanced health care and pay benefits for a now overstretched National Guard and Reserve units.

South Carolina lost the Charleston naval base and other installations a decade ago, and Beasley said he would resist the growing call for new closings by making sure "the Pentagon understands the important role South Carolina's bases play in our national security." Any realignment, he said, should be among U.S. bases overseas.

He pledged to be a part of "bipartisan consensus" to win extension of the anti-terror Patriot Act, "press the technological envelope for new military tools" to counter the terrorist threat and increases the capabilities of First Responders" with additional funding and a streamlined grant system.

Dan Hoover covers politics and can be reached at 298-4883.

How-To Guide 2004

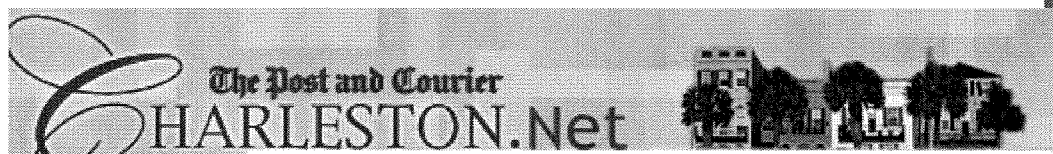
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Story last updated at 9:44 a.m. Thursday, June 3, 2004

DeMint aims to capitalize on House service

BY SCHUYLER KROPF
Of The Post and Courier Staff

When three-term U.S. Rep. Jim DeMint of Greenville entered the Republican race for U.S. Senate 18 months ago, the seat seemed to be his for the taking.

He was semi-cozy with the White House, his war chest was filling up, and none of the other four Republicans in the race seemed much of a threat.

But when former Gov. David Beasley came out of retirement in January to join the field, it upended DeMint's plans. Now, many voters are asking, "Who is Jim DeMint?"

Quiet and reserved, DeMint shot high in his first bid for elective office. He practically walked off the street in 1998 as a Greenville marketing professional with no previous political experience to win the Upstate's 4th Congressional District, beating state Sen. Mike Fair, the favorite of the Christian right, in a runoff.

Through three terms in Washington, DeMint, 52, has been a quick study of GOP politics, latching onto basic mantras: tax cuts,



Jim DeMint



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One of his primary personal missions in Washington is to expand adoption rather than abortion, something he helped push along by getting Congress to pass a \$10,000 tax credit for families who adopt.

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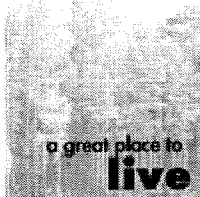
Supporters say DeMint's six years in Congress make him the most qualified to represent South Carolina in the Senate, even if he remains largely an unknown around Charleston.

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"Jim DeMint is a very sincere regular person, and I think we need more of that," said Bart Daniel, former U.S. attorney for South Carolina and an influential Charleston Republican who was an early DeMint supporter.

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Daniel endorsed DeMint even though a win in November would give South Carolina two Republican senators from the Upstate. First-term U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham is from Seneca, a short 35-mile drive from DeMint's Greenville base.



Daniel downplayed arguments that picking South Carolina's senator is partially about spreading representation around geographically. He maintained that Charleston and South Carolina on the whole would be better off replacing homegrown Democratic Sen. Fritz Hollings with the experienced Upstate Republican.



"When you get in the U.S. Senate, you have to represent the whole state," Daniel said. "Lindsey Graham proved you could do that."

Growing up in Greenville, DeMint was focused on music, and politics wasn't even a shadow on the horizon. Music was how his mother, Betty Batson, put food on the table after his parents divorced and his father left home.

With no marketable skills and four children to feed, she started a dance school in her Greenville home. It supported her family in the 1950s and '60s. She called it The DeMint Academy of Dance and Decorum, and DeMint occasionally acted as a dancing partner.

"It was always interesting," DeMint reflected. "She was teaching class from after school to adult classes at night."

In high school during the late 1960s, DeMint played drums and sang backup in a band just as segregation in South Carolina was becoming a thing of the past. The group's lineup was half-black and half-white, and they preferred to play beach music. They went by the apt name Salt and Pepper and played dances and get-togethers.

"I never really was aware of a lot of racial tension," he said of his teen years. "Some of my friends were black. I guess we got off easy."

One of the greatest achievements in racial healing during the past 30 years, DeMint said, is that racists of the past are now dubbed social outcasts.

"Anybody who is bigoted, the stigma is on them," he said. "I think that's one of the greatest things that's happened in our generation, to eliminate that whole segregation thing."

After high school, DeMint attended the University of Tennessee, enrolling in pre-med classes. It was a career path he freely concedes he wasn't prepared for; academically, he was in over his head. He switched to advertising, later getting his master's in business administration at Clemson University. After college, he married his high school girlfriend, and they went on to have four children.

DeMint worked in advertising and marketing after what he said was a pro-Chamber of Commerce, United Way business career around Greenville. Then the political bug bit hard. In 1992, he signed up to help friend and former Congressman Bob Inglis run for the 4th District seat. Inglis won.

Six years later, after Inglis launched his own bid for the Senate against Hollings, a 46-year-old DeMint set out on his first campaign, filing to run for Inglis' seat. After that tough race, the high school drummer became a congressman and won re-election twice.

This year, two of DeMint's votes are getting close scrutiny by opponents. Both are key factors in the race, especially among his Greenville base, which is a mix of conservative business, religious and textile industry Republicans.

The first was his 2001 House vote that gave fast-track trade authority to President Bush. Approval of "fast-track" gave the president unilateral power to negotiate overseas trade agreements before having to go to Congress, which then would have little chance to stop them. DeMint backed the plan as an advocate of what he said is free trade in a global economy. He argued it would help South Carolina diversify its economy.

Fast-track opponents said it gave an unfair advantage to the White House because trade deals could come at the cost of some South Carolina industries, such as textiles, which are cheaper to produce overseas.

The vote from the congressman representing an area once dubbed "the textile capital of the world" cost DeMint politically in a region hit hard after the North American Free Trade Agreement.

DeMint says his vote was the right way to go even if it angered powerful Upstate textile company baron Roger Milliken, 88 and South Carolina's only recognized billionaire, so much he "recruited David Beasley to run against me."

Despite voting with Bush on trade in 2001, DeMint insists he's not beholden to the White House. He was one of the 25 Republicans in the House of Representatives who voted against the White

House-supported plan to restructure the Medicare prescription drug entitlement. DeMint cited the cost of the plan, which was designed to give universal prescription drug benefits to seniors. Although the bill narrowly passed, DeMint's opposition angered some in the White House.

DeMint contends his political philosophy is geared toward whatever side of the issue provides the greatest individual liberty. Although government programs can help people achieve, they also can enslave, he said.

"A dependent people in a free land is something that drove me nuts. As people become dependent, they become more and more helpless. Freedom begets freedom," he said.

JIM DEMINT

AGE: 52

RESIDENCE: Greenville

FAMILY: wife Debbie; four children: daughters Ginger and Donna; sons Jake and Tim

EDUCATION: University of Tennessee; MBA Clemson University, 1981

PHONE NUMBER/E-MAIL ADDRESS: (866) 546-2004;
info@jimdemint.com

OCCUPATION: marketing

POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: 4th District U.S. Representative since 1998

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HILTON HEAD ISLAND - BLUFFTON S.C.

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Opinion calls tax item into question

Open-space proposal not specific enough

BY ASHLEY FLETCHER, *The Island Packet*

Other stories by Ashley Fletcher

Published Thursday, June 3rd, 2004

BEAUFORT -- An opinion from the S.C. Attorney General's Office indicates Beaufort County cannot use dollars from a proposed 1 percent sales tax increase to preserve open space in the greater Bluffton area, members of the county's sales tax commission said Wednesday.

But commission members, appointed to decide which projects will be funded if the tax referendum passes, said Wednesday the opinion takes too narrow a focus and does not consider the specifics of the land-buying idea proposed by the towns of Hilton Head Island and Bluffton.

They plan to contact the attorney who wrote the opinion, requested by the Town of Hilton Head Island, and explain the proposal in more detail before deciding whether to add land-buying to the list of projects County Council likely will put before voters in November.

While the goal of the property purchase is to prevent traffic-generating development, Hilton Head officials have said trails could be added to the parcels to turn them into parks, which are allowed under the state law that outlines procedures for local sales taxes.

Although most commission members felt the idea complies with state law, they took the proposal for spending \$15 million on land preservation off the preliminary project list two weeks ago, saying a questionable project could jeopardize the whole referendum.

No lawsuits have been filed over local sales taxes in South Carolina, so no case law exists to guide the county on the matter.

The issue resurfaced at Wednesday's commission meeting because Steve Riley, Hilton Head town manager, gave members copies of the opinion he requested.

The opinion does not directly address the question of whether sales tax money can be used to purchase open space to be used for parks as proposed. It said sales tax money cannot be used to buy land for a park if construction of the park is funded from another source, and sales tax money cannot be used to fund only a phase of a project with additional phases paid by other funding sources.

The opinion also said a project must be presented on the ballot with enough specifics that voters understand what the project is but not so many details that officials later are bound from exercising discretion in spending dollars to complete it.

Colden Battey, co-chairman of the commission and a private attorney, said he believes the opinion suggests the land-buying proposal could be questioned legally, and for that reason he does not want to add it to the list because it could kill the whole referendum.

The opinion applies not only to the greater Bluffton land-buying idea, Battey said, but also to proposals to acquire property along the railroad in Port Royal for recreational trails and property along the railroad in Yemassee for a park. The

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commission took all three projects off the list until they get further clarification.

"I would much rather the money for these projects, (which) are worthwhile, come from other places," said Battey, who represents the city of Beaufort on the commission.

But Roberts Vaux, a Bluffton representative on the commission and a private attorney, said he thinks the three projects could pass muster if worded correctly.

"If you state with specificity what property you're going to acquire and you state with specificity what you're going to use the property for ... I think that flies," Vaux said.

Hilton Head and Bluffton's initial proposal was allocating \$15 million from sales tax revenues to land-buying, but commission members said they needed to identify specific parcels for voters.

Riley suggested such a tract on Wednesday: a 19-acre parcel with frontage on U.S. 278 located somewhere between S.C. 170 and Simmonsville Road that would cost about \$4.5 million. More details could be provided on the land in the future, Riley said.

Also on Wednesday, county finance director Tom Henrikson said the S.C. Department of Revenue told him \$21.8 million was collected in 2003 for each 1 percent of sales tax levied in Beaufort County. Commission members had estimated the additional 1 percent would generate at least \$25 million a year and last week decided they could fund \$99 million in projects if the local sales tax were levied for four years.

After learning of the Revenue Department's calculations, members discussed levying the tax for five years but put off a vote until next week.

Contact Ashley Fletcher at 706-8144 or afletcher@islandpacket.com.

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Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

DMV reviews use of dealer tag

Inquiry will focus on Corvette loaned to Sanford staffer

By JIM DAVENPORT
The Associated Press

The state Department of Motor Vehicles is inquiring about the decision by a Columbia car dealer to loan a car to Gov. Mark Sanford's spokesman last month.

The 2001 red Corvette convertible had dealer tags, which are strictly limited by state law.

"We're reviewing the issue and taking the appropriate action," DMV spokeswoman Beth Parks said Wednesday. "There's a case open," and it has been assigned to an agent to review.

Inappropriate use of a dealer license plate can result in a \$300 fine and the forfeiture of the plate.

Car dealer J.T. Gandolfo owns Dodgeland of Columbia and was appointed by Sanford in 2002 to lead a task force charged with overhauling the agency that licenses drivers and vehicles.

Gandolfo sold a car to Sanford's spokesman, Will Folks, in December. Folks said part of that deal included receiving new tires for the car at a later date.

Last month, when Folks took his car in for the new tires, Gandolfo loaned Folks the \$36,000 Corvette. Folks drove the car May 21-28.

State law says dealer plates "may be used exclusively on motor vehicles owned by, assigned or loaned for test driving purposes to the dealer when operated on the highways of this state by the dealer, its corporate officers, its employees or a prospective purchaser of the motor vehicle."

Gandolfo, known in the Midlands for his campy TV ads, did not immediately return a phone call Wednesday seeking comment on the DMV inquiry. He said Tuesday that Folks wasn't a prospective buyer.

Gandolfo said he was aware of the law limiting how dealer tags can be used and said that he generally doesn't allow customers to use cars with dealer tags while their personal vehicles are in for repairs.

Despite his involvement in revamping DMV last year, Gandolfo "is not involved in anything we're doing at DMV right now," Parks said. He is "not involved in our day-to-day operations or anything like that."

Gandolfo said since the task force work was completed, he's had conversations with the Sanford administration only on plans to move DMV headquarters to Blythewood.

Folks, it appears, did nothing illegal by borrowing the car and did not violate any state ethics rules. Although, some legislators questioned the appearance of a governor's staff member driving a car provided by a dealer who advises the governor.

Sanford's office said the governor would not comment on the situation.

Legislators said it might be time to look at tougher laws governing public employees and the gifts or favors they receive.

"We need tighter legislation to prevent high-ranking staff officials from being given valuable property," said Rep. John Graham Altman, R-Charleston.

Those types of things may "at least require reporting," said House Judiciary chairman Jim Harrison, R-Richland.

A ban on gifts would create a tangle unless presents from family and friends for birthdays and holidays are excluded, Harrison said, but gifts tied to someone's role in state government could be limited.

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Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

TUESDAY'S PRIMARY | Senate redistricting

New district lines cause confusion

By JOHN O'CONNOR
Staff Writer

Campaign signs for Democrat Eddie Sullivan and Republican Ken Wingate face each other on the broad green lawns of Heathwood.

But the two candidates for the South Carolina Senate are not running against each other. Wingate is a candidate in District 22, but the Heathwood homes have been shifted to District 21.

The misplaced campaign signs illustrate the confusion after last year's Senate redistricting. When polls open for the Tuesday primary, some voters in the Republican enclave might be surprised to find no GOP candidates are running in their district.

"I've been to the polls and found I couldn't vote for someone," said Cliff Bodiford, who lives in the neighborhood and was surprised to find he was in a different district when he went to vote in a Columbia City Council election.

"The Legislature should have to explain redistricting ... People ought to know so they know who to vote for."

Heathwood voters will not be alone. Tuesday's primary will be the first since thousands of Midlands residents were shuffled to new representatives during redistricting last year.

Bodiford knew of the change because he is a friend of Sullivan's, but some of his neighbors admitted they were surprised. State law requires counties to notify voters if they have changed precincts.

District 21, represented by Sen. Darrell Jackson, formerly included Lower Richland and Calhoun County. The new district excludes Calhoun County but adds neighborhoods from Screaming Eagle Road, near Kershaw County, to Lower Richland and also along S.C. 277 to Dentsville in the Northeast.

Those two areas are connected by a thin strip that runs through the heart of Heathwood and Shandon.

Richland County voter registration estimates about 51,000 of 178,000 registered county voters are in new Senate districts.

"There's lots of instances in our county where we have whole precincts that have changed districts," said Gloria Wilson, director of the Richland voter registration office. "It's very confusing."

Wilson said her office has received at least a half-dozen calls a day seeking help, and the number is rising as the election nears.

In Kershaw County, about 1,100 of 30,700 voters have switched Senate districts. Lexington County could not provide an estimate and said it had received few questions, even though some county districts are different.

The changes in Senate District 21 are the most dramatic, but other areas have been shuffled, as well. District 22 contains more of Northeast Richland, while District 19 now includes parts of downtown and Harbison.

In Lexington County, Irmo areas once represented by Sen. Jake Knotts are split among districts in which Newberry County's Ronny Cromer and Richland County's John Courson are the incumbents.

Cromer's district also wraps around the south shore of Lake Murray and ends near the area where Smith Pond Road meets U.S. 378. About one-quarter of Courson's district is in Lexington.

Some House districts have also been realigned. The town of Lexington, for instance, is split between District 87 and District 69. The Chapin area is split among three House districts.

This election marks the second straight in which House districts have been realigned. A previous plan was vetoed by former Democratic Gov. Jim Hodges, and federal judges redrew districts after a lengthy lawsuit. Legislators redrew the lines again last year after Republican Gov. Mark Sanford took office.

All the changes have affected county election officials, who had assigned voters to their newly realigned districts, only to have to reassign them to their old districts just so they could vote in special elections to fill vacant seats. After the special elections, they had to put them back in their new districts.

Bobby Bowers, who handles questions on district maps for the State Budget and Control Board, compared it to pouring two jars of peanuts together, then having to put the peanuts back into their original jars.

The changes also have been difficult for candidates, who have to meet voters in the reshaped districts.

Jackson is one of many incumbents who have sent introductory mailings and made phone calls to new constituents. He said many people were not aware of the changes, but that he thought primary voters were more active and aware of redistricting.

"I enjoy meeting new people," Jackson said. "You've got to get used to change."

Sullivan, the challenger in District 21, has brought the district map with him on door-to-door campaign trips. But, he said, it still can be difficult to identify exactly where the district ends.

After spending time courting one voter, Sullivan said, he learned the home was a half block outside his district.

"I put a sign there anyway, so all his neighbors can vote for me."

Reach O'Connor at (803) 771-8435 or johnnoconnor@thestate.com.

MyrtleBeachOnline.com

Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

SENATE DISTRICT 34

Horne drops out, endorses Cleary

**By Zane Wilson
The Sun News**

State Senate District 34 candidate Ricky Horne withdrew from the Republican primary race Wednesday and endorsed Ray Cleary.

Horne said he realized over the weekend that he got into the contest too late to put up a serious fight and that he knows his name can't be removed from the ballot this late in the game.

"But it's not too late for those who believe in me and my message to join me in supporting Ray," Horne said in a written statement. "He will do a great job for all of us."

Horne said his support of Cleary is based partly on the endorsement of retired Circuit Judge David Maring by The Sun News in Sunday's editions.

"While the judge is a worthy opponent, his direct tie to an immense support from trial lawyers across the state is of great concern to me," Horne said.

Maring received a large portion of his campaign contributions from lawyers. He said that if he did not get support from lawyers, people would have wondered why.

Maring said he is not surprised Horne would endorse Cleary "because they share the same beliefs in favor of a gas tax increase, and I'm opposed to it."

He said the gas tax became a hot issue during the campaign.

Horne said a gas tax increase is necessary to pay for the roads people want, and Cleary said he would consider one if it stayed in the district for road construction use only.

Maring said people who agree with Horne on the gas tax will vote for Cleary, but those who supported Horne for other reasons will vote for him.

Cleary could not be reached.

Horne's withdrawal lessens the chances of a runoff primary. A 51 percent majority is needed to clinch a nomination, and when three people or more are running it usually requires a runoff to determine the winner.

Democrats are not contesting the seat, so the primary winner is likely to become the senator.

Contact ZANE WILSON at 520-0397 or zwilson@thesunnews.com.

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Former S.C. House member named to high labor post

Published Wednesday, June 2nd, 2004

WASHINGTON (AP) - A former South Carolina House member has been named acting administrator of the U.S. Labor Department's Wage and Hour Division, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao said Wednesday.

Alfred Burgess Robinson Jr. has made a significant contribution to overseeing the development of important labor law policies, Chao said.

Robinson will become the acting administrator to ensure workers receive the wages and protections they are entitled to under the laws administered by the Wage and Hour Division, Chao said.

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Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

The State

Lawmakers have little to show for wretched session

THIS WAS SUPPOSED to be the year when legislators finally owned up to their obligations and took a radical new approach to how they spend money and how they collect it. This was supposed to be the year when lawmakers would finally recognize that nothing will do more to improve our economy and our quality of life, and even to eventually reduce the need for all sorts of expensive government services, than providing the resources necessary for every child in our state to get a decent education.

But with just one day remaining in the 21-week legislative session, there is no hope on any of these fronts:

Lawmakers rejected most of Gov. Mark Sanford's dramatic budget proposals and didn't come up with any of their own. So our most crucial agencies remain underfunded while we still fund agencies we could survive without, and we still waste money operating overlapping agencies that provide similar services and sometimes even refuse to cooperate.

Lawmakers got all worked up over trying to provide temporary and troubling fixes to rising property tax bills, while a well-thought-out plan to take a comprehensive approach to our tax system and address the actual problems with it never even got a hearing.

As for public education: Well, we apparently won't be underfunding the schools quite as badly as this year, but lawmakers still chose to ignore their own legally mandated formula on how much they should spend. And they refused to even consider the idea that as much money should be spent to hire qualified teachers and buy adequate textbooks to educate a child in a poor district as a child who happens to live in a rich district.

Legislators have passed a handful of good bills this year, and there are still a few more that could make it into law before the bell rings at 5 p.m. today, bringing this wretched session to an end. But there are just as many, if not more, bills that could make it through that would do active harm to our state.

The governor's ill-conceived plan to suck more money out of underfunded government services by cutting income tax rates still could somehow slip through, as could another piecemeal proposal to shift much of the property tax burden off homeowners in popular neighborhoods and onto car owners, businesses and those who own less desirable homes, as well as a handful of small, special-interest tax breaks.

While the bills that would allow the chief executive to actually run the executive branch of government stagnate, bills to strip him of even more power, and in one case revive a completely autonomous agency, are ascendant.

And on a host of other issues, lawmakers are just steps away from doing active harm to our state, from neutering the Judicial Merit Selection Commission to prohibiting counties from regulating chicken farms and taking other actions stronger than state law. And with the rate at which the House is attaching unrelated measures to Senate bills and senators are suddenly shifting gears and signing off on oral compromises on other measures, there's no telling what else could happen today.

But even if all the good bills still standing manage to pass and none of the harmful ones make it through, the 2004 General Assembly will still be remembered not for any new law passed but for opportunities missed and responsibilities shirked.

MyrtleBeachOnline.com

Posted on Thu, Jun. 03, 2004

THE SUN NEWS

Common Sense on Minibottles

Voters should allow bars, eateries free-pour option

Good for the S.C. House, including most members of the Horry County delegation, for putting a constitutional amendment on liquor minibottles before S.C. voters in November. If the voters approve it, as they should, the owners of establishments with liquor licenses will decide whether bartenders pour drinks from big bottles or minibottles.

House passage of this compromise, which the Senate passed in April, is a victory for the hospitality industry, which has sought the change for years. More important, it is a victory for moderate liquor consumption - particularly on mixed drinks in which more than one liquor is used. As many visitors from other states could attest, the standard 1.7-ounce minibottle of liquor is a bigger jolt than a lot of folks are accustomed to receiving from one drink. The free-pour option would take care of this problem.

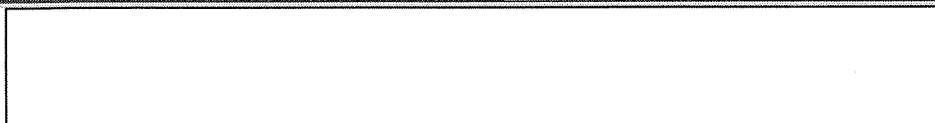
At the prodding of the liquor wholesalers who profit from selling minibottles to bars and restaurants, legislators resisted a minibottle amendment for years. They've done the responsible thing at last and deserve credit for that.

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Dustup in Columbia shows folly of pledges

Anti-tax group shoots itself in the foot with narrow focus

Published Wednesday, June 2nd, 2004

A Washington, D.C., anti-tax group's spat with state Rep. Bobby Harrell illustrates the foolishness of elected leaders signing blanket pledges.

The Americans for Tax Reform group recently ran TV ads in Columbia calling Harrell "the face of wasteful government spending in South Carolina."

The group was angry at Harrell for pushing through a long-term, \$5 million state investment in a proposed college football bowl game in Charleston.

Harrell, a Charleston Republican who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, and all his colleagues deserve to be held accountable for that budget decision.

But that accountability should not be placed in the hands of an out-of-state group that is more interested in mindless pledges than the political necessity of compromise or the more truthful bigger picture.

In a tight budget year, with too few Highway Patrol troopers on the road thanks to budget cuts, we, too, disagree with funding the proposed Palmetto Bowl. Gov. Mark Sanford, who vetoed it only to see it quickly overridden, also opposed it. But it is pitched as an investment in the economy that actually will help the state's future bottom line. In that way, it is similar to many state expenditures, particularly in the economic development arena. That decision should be made within the state by people accountable to South Carolina voters.

The folly of the ad campaign is that Harrell is widely known as a tax cutter. He recently pushed through the House a measure to align state tax codes with federal codes to eliminate the so-called "marriage penalty" and cut the estate tax. That will cost the state \$52 million in revenue. It, also, is not a wise thing to do when there's not enough money to fund state services. But it is more reflective of the big picture of Harrell's tax principles.

So what we have is a group more concerned with its own agenda than it is with local governance. But those governance decisions, all filled with nuances, belong here, with people who should be smart enough to use their own minds to weigh pluses and minuses and hopefully make decisions based on what is good for the state, not what is good for a political sound bite. There is already too much rubber-stamping going on in Columbia and Washington, and not enough individuals using their own minds.

It turns out that the anti-tax group is really upset at Harrell because he wisely refuses to sign its pledge or any other pledge. South Carolina leads the nation in the number of House and Senate members willing to blindly sign the following: "I (name) pledge to the taxpayers of the (district No.) district, of the state of (state), and to all the people of this state, that I will oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes."

Harrell trumped that foolishness with a more responsible statement: "The only people I've pledged my vote to is the 33,000 people I represent in Charleston. I see my vote as an almost covenant with those people, and I'm not giving it to anybody else."

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